

Donovan Brings The Word

By William Tucker
Reporter of The Miami News

Negotiator James Donovan returned to Miami with a report from Havana last night that 25 American prisoners should be released soon and that Fidel Castro also has agreed to consider freedom for thousands of Cuban political prisoners.

Donovan, the New York attorney, who arranged the exchange of the Bay of Pigs invaders and U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers, said he talked with Castro for 3 hours yesterday.

He said he offered a plan of his own for the release of the Americans and is "very optimistic" it will be accepted soon.

The basis of the plan, he said, is "entirely different" from the barter deal of 53 million dollars worth of goods for the freedom of the 1,113 Bay of Pigs captives.

"It is not in the best interest of completing this agreement to disclose what I proposed regarding the release of the Americans," Donovan added.

Donovan said he also inquired about the living conditions of the American prisoners, held for a variety of charges, and was assured by Castro they will be materially improved "immediately."

Regarding the thousands of imprisoned Cubans, Donovan said he received assurances from Castro that a "prompt review" of their cases will be made with an end toward working out their freedom.

This has been one of the sordest issues of the invasion prisoners exchange, and one that has caused cleavage among Cuban

leaders have contended the exchange should have included the

political prisoners or none at all.

Donovan said he had no idea how many Cubans Castro has imprisoned because of their political opposition, most of them on the Isle of Pines.

Donovan, wearing a plaid jacket with a big Cuban cigar Castro gave him sticking out of his pocket, arrived here at 8:55 p.m. last night after a day-long trip to Havana.

In contrast to an attempted secret departure from the old 36th Street terminal this morning, Donovan landed on his return at the main Pan American strip at Miami International Airport.

He went to the Pan American World Airways VIP room and held a brief press conference on the results of his trip.

He flew aboard an unmarked Pan Am DC-3 executive plane and had the permission of both the State Department and the Cuban government as on previous missions.

He emphasized he will have to make at least one more trip to Havana. As soon as he arrived here Donovan instructed an aide to make sure his passport is in order for another visit.

Donovan said he had his talk with Castro at a house in the Miramar section the Cuban Foreign Ministry uses for visiting guests.

He called it "one of the most beautiful villas I have ever seen."

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